



OASIS BELGIUM

# 2019

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[www.oasisbe.org](http://www.oasisbe.org)

[www.itlr.org](http://www.itlr.org)

[www.buurtbar.be](http://www.buurtbar.be)

## PREFACE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

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In 2019, Oasis Belgium has built on the foundation of years of experience working with some of the most vulnerable and excluded people in the country. It has been particularly good to see the growth of partnerships with other Non-Profit organisations to ensure that the work Oasis does is networked into Belgian civil society.

It has also been very encouraging to see that both in Oasis Welkom Project and in the Buurtbar Project, there has been a deepening connection with social services and that the regional and local government has begun to fund some of the costs of these vital services.

There is still a long road ahead to build the financial support these projects need, and also to increase the capacity that we have to scale up what we do, but 2019 has been a year of steps ahead into a future where we work increasingly in collaboration with the authorities and civil society. The future ahead is exciting!

Andy Williamson  
Board Chair, Oasis Belgium VZW



# OASIS BELGIUM: SUMMARY

*Oasis is a Christian organisation working in Belgium since 2007. Inspired by the life and teachings of Christ, we run projects supporting the children of people without papers, helping them to stay in school, eat well and have stable accommodation whilst helping the parents to regularise their papers and find work. We run projects that help women who have been trafficked to come out of exploitation, find community and employment. Oasis Belgium has a project which helps to connect isolated elderly people to community and also a project which uses running to raise awareness about human trafficking, as well as giving young people access to sport.*  
([www.oasisbe.org](http://www.oasisbe.org))

## ETHOS

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In Oasis we are Christ-centered; inspired by the life, message and example of Jesus Christ through whom God's unconditional love for all people is expressed. We are called to love God, and love others as we love ourselves. We therefore seek to work together to extend Jesus' model of the Kingdom of God on earth by living out a lifestyle according to this inspiration.

## VISION

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Our vision is for community - a place where everyone is included, making a contribution and reaching their God-given potential.

## MISSION

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Oasis is committed to working in an inclusive, integrated, empowering and comprehensive way so that all people experience wholeness and fullness of life.

## OUTCOMES

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Local communities that are characterised by high levels of trust, safety, cohesion, mutual support, vibrancy, health and opportunity, and have increasing capacity to address their own issues. People who are excluded from community brought back into community and finding wholeness and fullness of life. The replication of models that effectively contribute to community transformation or bring the excluded into community

## STRATEGY

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Our goal is to help people back into community, finding wholeness and fullness of life, and seeing local communities growing in vibrancy, health and opportunity. In order to achieve this, Oasis Belgium runs three projects; Oasis Welcome Project, Buurtbar, and the Brussels Project. The projects work to address problems such as domestic violence, human trafficking, vulnerability to exploitation and isolation in old age. The project teams are made up of both staff and volunteers and work in Brussels, Beringen, and across Belgium.

# THE PROJECTS

## OASIS WELKOM PROJECT

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For the past nine years, Oasis Belgium has worked with many trafficked and exploited women in Belgium, and those who have experienced violence in the home. The project runs a Thai language helpline and also receives referrals from the Thai Embassy, for Thai women who have been trapped in abusive relationships. The project also visits brothels and connects women to legal help, social services and counselling. The women are mostly from Thailand, but can also come from other countries around the world. The women enter the country and exploitation in a wide variety of ways. Some have been brought into the country by organised crime on marriage visas, and are then given drugs and are told to pay a huge debt. Others enter the country after marrying Belgian men, who are sometimes sex tourists, or perhaps have found them online. It is a slow, patient process helping these women take the first brave steps to start a new life.

*This year, we helped a Thai woman leave her abusive husband and begin a new life with her children. We helped her find a new place to live, and she was able to regain custody of her children after many difficult court dates. She is eager for her children to receive psychological counselling for the trauma they have experienced while living with their father and is working hard to provide for them.*



The Welkom Project has three part-time staff members who have each taken responsibility for a different aspect of the project. We have updated our documentation and monitoring systems, which helps us apply for grants and other funding opportunities, and helps us understand the population we are working with in greater depth.

The Welkom Project has also grown in partnerships with the Thai and Indonesian embassies, Thai temples, and other local NGOs. These partnerships help us access more women who need assistance and deliver better services and referrals.



Oasis Belgium receiving an award from the Office of Affairs and Projects under Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabhra's Initiative, and the Office of the Thai Attorney General

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019

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In 2019, the Oasis Welkom Project saw a growth in depth of partnerships and collaborations. In particular, a strong working relationship with the Thai Embassy developed. The project also worked closely with IOM, which helped to pay for and organise the return of some of the women we worked with to Thailand, ensuring a safe and stable homecoming.

The project also began to work alongside GAMS who offer healthcare to women in similar situations to those we work in. We also began to work in collaboration with the European Network of Migrant Women and Fem&Law lawyers for women's rights. This network of like-minded organisations helped us to help many more women.

In 2019, the project worked directly and intensively with 48 women who were mainly trapped in abusive relationships, with 9 successfully completing the program and reaching a place of safety and stability.

*S is a Thai woman in her early thirties. She came to Belgium after marrying a man she met while he was on holiday. They had a baby together, but sadly the husband has become abusive. He controlled her behaviour, didn't let her go out and when she didn't cook well or let him have sex with her whenever he wanted, he beat her. In desperation she called the Thai embassy who referred the case to us. The team visited S in a safe place, and listened to her as she told her story in Thai. One of her problems has been that she can't speak French and so she felt very isolated. The team took her to hospital to get treatment and evidence, and then to the social services. Finally, she decided to go to the police and file a complaint. We went with her to ensure that she got her rights, which included a translator. Now she is living in a social services provided accommodation with her child. This is a common outline in our cases, although it is a long process and sometimes there is no accommodation available, exposing the woman to more danger.*



## BIENVENUE BRUSSELS

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Oasis Belgium works with the vulnerable children of refugees, asylum seekers and families struggling with poverty in the centre of Brussels, helping them to stay in school and providing food. Whilst supporting the children, the project also works with their parents, helping them to regularise their papers, and then find contract work. It is a long-term project, which believes that the care of the children means a holistic approach to stabilising the entire family. The work began with helping families and children in one of the biggest squats in Europe, but when the police raided this squat and most of the families had to move to temporary homeless shelters or other makeshift accommodation, Oasis Belgium continued to help a handful of these families by helping them to find new accommodation, supporting the children in school, and helping single mothers provide for their families.

*Bienvenue Brussels is in a season of transition due to the needs of our beneficiaries and the capacity of Oasis staff. We are now prioritizing work with single mothers or mothers who have experienced domestic violence, as well as our long-term partnership with a local primary school that many children with a migration background attend.*

*In bringing Bienvenue Brussels under the Welkom Project, our staff and volunteers are able to use the same documentation scheme and resources to continue to reach vulnerable migrant women from many different parts of the globe.*



*During 2019, the project also ran yoga sessions in a local school, to help children to come to terms with their trauma and become more settled. Although 18 classes for 4-5 children of 8 - 12 years old have been organised, there is insufficient funding to continue this aspect of the project at this time.*



## THE BUURTBAR

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The aim of this project is to reach out to isolated and vulnerable elderly people, helping them to connect with their community, find friendship and also know their rights. The project is based in the city of Beringen in Limburg and runs a mobile coffee bar that goes into social housing areas, elderly care homes and supported living flats. In this way the project helps to bring the whole community together.

Since 2015, our mobile coffee bar, operating with volunteers, has been visiting several neighbourhoods, twice a week from May to October. Participants are encouraged to bring a neighbour, who might be alone, to enjoy a coffee and have the opportunity to chat together at the mobile coffee bar. During the colder months, Oasis organises indoor coffee bar sessions. We also focus on home visits to the very isolated elderly. Whenever possible, the project tries to find solutions to connect them to a wider network or services.

In 2019 the Buurtbar grew in its relationship with the city government in Beringen and with other social organisations such as Rimo. The volunteer team grew and around 500 people benefited from the service, which included coffee-bar events, one to one visits, Alpha groups exploring faith and life issues and "Duo-Plus", which matches elderly people with similar interests.

The Buurtbar project is designed to build bridges, and refer to existing social activities, relevant services and information that is available but often difficult to access. The Buurtbar is a welcomed addition to existing services, particularly in areas where there are few opportunities for elderly people to meet up with others.

[www.buurtbar.be](http://www.buurtbar.be)



## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019

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The Digibabel is a regular event where young people help the elderly to understand how to use their smart phones. Often it is conducted in partnership with the local library and local high schools. It started because of a need that the elderly expressed and is a very useful activity to draw elderly folk in as well as strengthening partnerships with the library and local schools. It is intergenerational, broadening everyone's social networks, so there are a lot of indirect benefits in organising this regularly.



For several events, the Buurtbar has worked with other partners, including a tour in partnership with local Buurt-restaurants and Rimo, a large organisation helping the disadvantaged.

In addition to this, our Duo-Plus scheme continued connecting elderly people with similar interests and also making home visits.

A highlight of the year was being awarded the "Megafoon Laureate" for 2019 by Oikonde vzw, winning a competition entered by more than thirty other organisations. It was a huge encouragement to our staff and team of enthusiastic volunteers.